

Message Text

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44

ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 EURE-00 NEA-05 IO-03 NSC-10

NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 SSO-00 INRE-00

PM-03 DODE-00 PRS-01 DRC-01 /059 W

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P R 201617Z DEC 73

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6618

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 14992

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, SY, UK, MOPS

SUBJECT: BRITISH VIEW OF SYRIAN INTENTIONS

1. ASSESSMENT FROM BRITISH AMBASSADOR IN DAMASCUS, DONE AT REQUEST OF FCO, WAS RECEIVED IN LONDON DECEMBER 20. WHILE REFERRING TO INTELLIGENCE REPORTS FROM AMMAN TO THE CONTRARY, AND POINTING OUT THAT ABSENCE OF WAR PREPARATIONS IS NOT CONCLUSIVE IN ITSELF, AMBASSADOR NEVERTHELESS CONCLUDED THAT SIGNIFICANT ESCALATION OF HOSTILITIES BY SYRIANS IS, ON THE WHOLE, UNLIKELY FOR NEXT FEW WEEKS AT LEAST.

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2. BRITISH HAVE NOTED PRESS ACCOUNT BY CHURCH REPRE-

SENTATIVE VISITING SYRIA WHO SAID HE SAW TWO ISRAELI POWS THERE. BRITISH BELIEVE SYRIANS CURRENTLY HOLD SOME ISRAELI POWS.

3. ON DECEMBER 19 DEPT. HEAD CRAIG SAW HEAD OF WESTERN EUROPEAN DEPT. IN SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY, WHO IS AT PRESENT IN LONDON HOSPITAL. SYRIAN STRESSED THAT BRITISH EXAMINE VERY CLOSELY EXACT WORDS OF SYRIAN STATEMENT REFUSING TO COME TO GENEVA CONFERENCE. FCO OFFICIALS CONCLUDE FROM THIS (AND OTHER ATMOSPHERICS) THAT REAL POSSIBILITY EXISTS SYRIANS MAY JOIN CONFERENCE AT LATER DATE, IF INITIAL DISCUSSIONS ON SINAI DISENGAGEMENT ARE SUCCESSFUL.

4. ABOVE WAS OBTAINED FROM FCO WORKING LEVEL OFFICIALS. ASST. UNDERSECRETARY PARSONS WAS CONSIDERABLE GLOOMIER WITH US ON POSSIBLE SYRIAN INTENTIONS, THOUGH WITH NO NEW INFORMATION AT HAND. HE THOUGHT RESUMPTION OF MAJOR HOSTILITIES BY SYRIANS COULD NOT BE RULED OUT AND COULD HAVE EFFECT OF DRAGGING EGYPTIANS INTO IT, ESPECIALLY IF SYRIANS WERE BEATEN BY ISRAELIS AND DRIVEN BACK TOWARD DAMASCUS.

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